Sense of Community and Participation for Tourism Development

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Abstract: This article investigate the relationship between sense of community and level of participation in tourism activities in Shiraz, Iran. Pearson correlation has been used to determine the relationship between these variables. The findings through survey questionnaire showed that there are significant relation between sense of community and level of participation for local tourism development. According to the results, sense of community can have a catalytic effect on development of tourism industry through enhancement of local participation.
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1. Introduction

Sense of community and participation are the main factors which can effect on processes of tourism development. Without community participation and sense of community tourism development could not be achieved. Bopp et al. (2000, p. 113) defines sense of community in the following way: "sense of community refers to the quality of human relationship that makes it possible for people to live together in a healthy and sustainable way". The sense of community plays an important role in fostering community support for tourism development and may enhance its long-term sustainability as a broad basis for tourism development planning (Hall et al., 2005). Developing a sense of community contributes to participation by enabling people to feel connected and motivated to live in harmony and work together towards common goals. Sense of community can be seen as the capacity of the local people to participate in development activities (Cupples, 2005).

Tourism developers often like to encourage a sense of community among residents as a way of contributing to tourism development. This study provides a study of applying an approach of sense of community and participation for tourism development. While there is a substantial body of literature on the definition and conceptualization of sense of community (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Davidson & Cotter, 1989; McMillan & Chavis, 1986), only a few literatures discuss the practical application of approaches that have been successfully used to measure sense of community in different cultural contexts. Little research also has been conducted on sense of community and community participation. Local communities for tourism development requires strengthening of sense of community (Conway & Hachen, 2005).

2. Literature review

Tourism industry is often referred to as the world's largest industry and regarded as a means of achieving sustainable development and it represents significant economic, environmental, and socio cultural opportunities for many local communities (Sharpley, 2002). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2008), tourism accounts for nearly 10% of the world's GDP comprising $5.89 trillion in economic activity and is expected to nearly double by 2018 (WTTC, 2008). Harrill & Potts (2003, p. 233) believed that "tourism is an invisible industry, encompassing transportation, loading, and entertainment. Unfortunately, tourism is also invisible to many planners, so tourism development is often left to private developers and leisure service providers" (Harrill & Potts, 2003, p. 233). Tourism also is the sum of the phenomena and links arising from the interaction of tourists, governments, and local communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors. Tourism research has also recently come to be a favorite research subject in community development researches (Galston & Baehler, 1995).

Tourism is undoubtedly important for local, national, and international levels. It should not form the core element of a community's economy, but is better suited to play a supplementary role to help diversify community economic activities (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Tourism has become a source of income generation for many communities seeking ways to improve their livelihoods. Clearly, tourism and its impacts is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, cultural,

ecological, environmental, and political forces (Singh et al., 2003). A key term used in tourism development is a sense of community. Sense of community is the feeling of obligation and commitment of an individual towards other members in the community develops over time through understanding of collective values, beliefs and interests among community members. Sense of community also is a feeling of belonging to the community (Bowen et al., 2003). Sarason (1974) defined the sense of community as the interdependence between individuals and communities. Bopp et al. (2000, p. 113) defines sense of community in the following way: "sense of community refers to the quality of human relationship that makes it possible for people to live together in a healthy and sustainable way" (Bopp et al., 2000, p. 113).

The importance and need for sense of community and participation in building strong capacity communities for tourism development cannot be ignored(Aref et al., 2010). Community participation can be seen as a process whereby the residents of a community are given a voice and a choice to participate in issues affecting their lives. Whether a community participates or not is determined by a variety of factors. One such factor is reluctance to participate because the community members do not trust each other. Community participation can thus be enhanced by addressing barriers to participation while at the same time taking the necessary steps to promote the principles of sustainable participation (Theron, 2005).

Community participation in tourism development processes can support and uphold local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, and create pride in community heritage (Lacy et al., 2002). The goal of community participation is to improve communication between stakeholders in the interest of facilitating better decision-making and sustainable development (Nampila, 2005).

Community participation also is the mechanism for active community involvement in partnership working, decision making and representation in community structures (Chapman & Kirk, 2001). It should be noted that community participation often means the involvement of people or community with the government. However, this study emphasized the participation of the community as an involvement of local people in tourism development processes. Without participation, there is obviously no partnership, no development and no program. Hence lack of community participation in decision making to implement tourism development can lead to failure in the community development (Miranda, 2007). Community participation increases people's sense of control over issues that affect their lives and also promotes self-confidence and self-awareness (Nampila, 2005). Levi & Litwin (1986, p. 26) also regard community participation as the creation of a democratic system and procedure to enable community members to become actively involved and to take responsibility for their own development, to share equally in the fruits of community development and to improve their decision-making power. Community participation provides a sense of community to take responsibility for oneself and others, and a readiness to share and interact (Aref et al., 2010). Figure 1 depicts the tourism development chain. The figure shows that progress in the outcome of community development also contributed to sense of community and tourism development. This figure also emphasized on community participation as important key for tourism development.
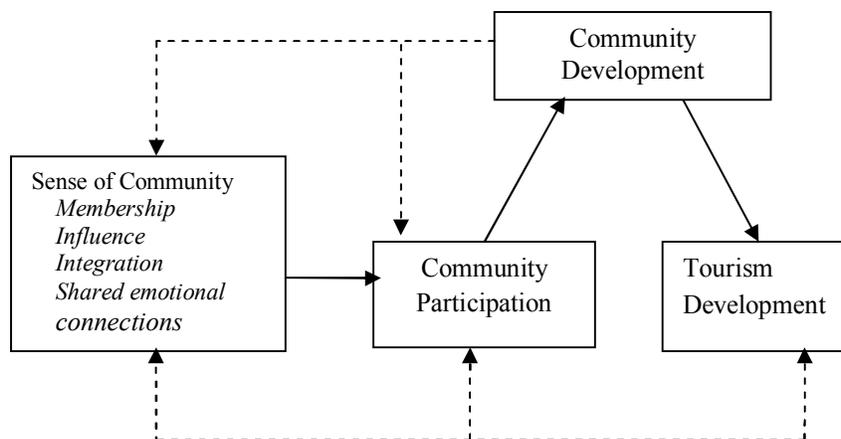

Figure 1: Tourism Development Chain : Adapted from Phillips & Pittman (2008)

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Jones (1996) concludes that the development of a successful community based tourism strategy will require a sound institutional framework based on a partnership between the local community, state, the private sector and Non-governmental Organizations. In reality, however, participation is a continuum based on the degree of people's involvement in deciding or influencing the decision making process concerning the tourism development program or in its implementation. Although the types of participation are differ between the authors, the main aspects which differentiate between the stages within the typologies are the same. They share common ideas regarding the extent or the degree to which community members have the chance or are given the chance to decide for themselves. Table 1 showed the main typology of participation which had been done by Preety (1995).

Table 1: Typology of community participation in tourism development

Typology	Comments
Passive Participation	-People participation is limited to be told what is going to happened -People's responses are not taken into account -Information belongs only to external professionals
Participation in information giving	-People participation is limited to provision of information in response to questionnaires, surveys etc. designed by external agents -Findings of the research are not shared with the people
Participation by consulting	-People participation involves consultation with local people -They may take into account people's views during this process, but are not obliged to do so
Participation for material incentives	-People participate by contributing resources (e.g. labour) in return for food, cash or other material incentive -Farmers may provide fields and labour but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning -This is often called participation, but people have no stake -This is often called participation, but people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end
Functional participation	-People participate by forming groups to meet specific objectives related to the project -Involvement may be interactive but tends to arise later in the project cycle after major decisions have been made -Institutions formed tend to depend on external facilitators, but may become self dependent
Interactive Participation	-People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and creation or strengthening of local institutions -Participation is seen as a right and not only as a means of achieving projects goals -It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes -Local groups take control of local decision making and determine how resources are to be used giving them a stake in maintaining structures or practices
Self-mobilization	-People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions or change systems -They develop contacts with external institutions for advice and resources, but retain control of the use of resources - Self-mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power

Source: Pretty (1995)

3. Methods

In order to achieve the stated objective, data had to be obtained from the leaders in the designated study area. The leaders for this study were identified in the 175 local communities with the help of the Shiraz municipality and the Islamic council of Shiraz. The data were collected through a survey questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire for this survey were measured using Likert scale. Relation between sense of community and level of participation were measured by 14 item on a 5 point Likert scale (0=never 1=seldom 2= sometimes 3=often 4= always). Pre-testing of the research instrument was carried out to examine the appropriateness and reliability of the instrument. The results were sufficiently comprehensive and verified the value of the instrument (Aref, 2010). Pearson correlation was used to interpret the data in this study.

4. Results and discussion

The questionnaire was used to obtain the primary data through a survey of 175 community leaders of Shiraz. All the respondents provided completed answers to every question. Out of the 175 leaders, 5.14% were females and 94.86% were males,

with an average age of 53.12 years. The youngest participant was 33 years and the eldest one was 72 years of age. Out of all the respondents, 26.36% state their highest level of education is diploma and 42.86% holds the bachelor's degree. This study was to determine the relationship between sense of community and their participation for tourism development. Pearson correlation used to identify this relationship. Correlation statistic is a statistical technique to measure the strength of the association that exists between two quantitative variables (Ary et al., 1996).

The Pearson correlation coefficient, r, will be used to measure the degree of linear relationship. The value of r is always between +1 and -1. A Pearson correlation addressed the relationship between sense of community (M = 18.74, SD = 3.683), with the level of community participation (M=13.95, SD= 4.184). For an alpha level of .05, the correlation between sense of community and level of community participation was found to be significant, (r = .000, N = 175, p =. 766, two-tailed). The table 1 indicates that sense of community and level of community participation are significant (r = .000, N = 175, p =. 766, two-tailed).

Table 1: Pearson correlation between sense of community and participation

Variables		Community participation	Sense of community
Community participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.766(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	175	175
Sense of community	Pearson Correlation	.766(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	175	175

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Findings through Pearson Correlation showed there is positive significant relationship between community participation and sense of community in terms of tourism development. Participation and sense of community are the main factors which can effect on processes of community development. Without these factors tourism development could not be achieved. In support with this findings of the study, David & Wandersman (1990) stated that sense of community can have a catalytic effect on local action such a community participation by affecting the perception of the environment, social relations, and one's perceived control and environment. Levi and Litwin (1986: 25) also stated that Community participation provides a sense of community to take

responsibility for oneself and others, and a readiness to share and interact.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the role of sense of community and participation in local tourism development in Shiraz, Iran. Sense of community is an individual's perception of being responsibility to supported by, and belonging to his/her community. Assessing sense of community is an important step in developing tourism strategies to achieve community development (Marre & Weber, 2007). Sense of community is a motivation to support local people for participation in tourism activities. Clearly, sense of community plays an influential role in the success of tourism in local communities.

According to the results, sense of community can have a catalytic effect on development of tourism industry through enhancement of local participation. Findings from this study could be used as guidelines in developing scale for measuring sense of community in other areas of tourism and community development.

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